

Washington, D.C. — Congressman Joe Sestak today continued to press for a more ethical Congress, voting for lobbying and ethics reforms and urging the creation of an Independent Ethics Commission. He voted in favor of The Honest Leadership & Open Government Act (H.R. 2316) and The Lobbying Transparency Act of 2007 (H.R. 2317).

“I have strongly supported stronger ethic requirements since I began my campaign for Congress. Even in the military, we had stronger ethic requirements than we have in the House,” said Congressman Sestak. “I supported these bills because they’re a good start, but we need to go even further and have an independent ethics commission. That is why I withdrew my amendment for an independent ethics office and submitted it as a bill with the personal assurance of Speaker Pelosi that she would work with me on it to bring it about imminently.”

The Lobbying Transparency Act of 2007 (H.R. 2317) requires a registered lobbyist who bundles two or more contributions exceeding a combined total of \$5,000 a quarter made to a covered recipient during a quarterly period to file a quarterly report with the Secretary of the Senate and the Clerk of the House of Representatives.

Because he feels no ethics law can be too broad, Congressman Sestak also voted with Republicans and a handful of Democrats to include grassroots groups in the bundling disclosure requirements. Groups on both sides of the political spectrum would have to disclose their contributions.

In addition, Congressman Sestak voted with Republicans and spoke on the House floor against an amendment that places a one-year ban on flag and general officers of the Armed Services from receiving compensation from any company that does greater than \$50 million in business with the Department of Defense. Joe stated that leadership by example – so that others will emulate one’s standards – is the defining issue. And if this is to be applicable to others, then Members of Congress should be held to the same – or higher – standards. Congressman Sestak stated that he would vote to support such a restriction on Congress.

“Question – how can Congress look across the Potomac River at the Pentagon and say to our military officers that you can’t work at a company that has more than \$50 million in government contracts and then not do the same for ourselves?” asked Congressman Sestak. “Why can Members of Congress work for lobbying firms the day after they leave, with some restrictions, but then say others cannot work for them at all? I can support this ban if it applies to us – Members of Congress – as well.”

Finally, Congressman Sestak sided with Republicans on a third amendment that would:

- Require a lobbyist approaching a Member of Congress to disclose the earmark they are lobbying for;
- Ban gifts from state and local governments;

- Prohibit new staffers in Congress who were previously employed by lobbyists from communicating on issues promoted by their prior firm or their clients; and
- Require quarterly reports from lobbyists of bundled contributions totaling more than \$5,000.

The Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007 (H.R. 2316) retains the current one year ban on lobbying by former, high-level staff, as well as:

- Requires public disclosure by Members of Congress and congressional staff of employment negotiations.
- Subjects to fines and penalties a Member of Congress or a congressional employee who wrongfully influences, on a partisan basis, an entity's employment decisions or practices.
- Amends the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 (LDA) to require: (1) quarterly instead of semiannual filing of lobbying disclosures reports; (2) electronic filing; (3) disclosure of registered lobbyist contributions; (4) disclosure by registered lobbyists of all past executive and congressional employment; and (5) maintenance of certain lobbying disclosure information in an electronic data base, available to the public free of charge over the Internet.
- Amends the LDA to prohibit a registered lobbyist from making a gift or providing travel to a Member, officer, or employee of Congress, unless the gift or travel may be accepted under the rules of the House of Representatives or the Senate.
- Revises criteria, with regard to disclosure requirements, for determining a coalition or association of groups that retain a person to conduct lobbying activities.
- Amends the Rules of the House to require a Member of the House to prohibit all of his or her staff from having any official contact with the Member's spouse if such individual is a registered lobbyist or is employed or retained by a registered lobbyist to influence legislation.
- Requires the Clerk of the House to: post certain travel and financial disclosure reports on the public Internet site of the Clerk's Office and maintain the information for at least six years after receiving such information.

Congressman Sestak yesterday submitted legislation proposing an independent ethics commission. And Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi pledged to personally work with him on this piece. This action follows up on Congressman Sestak's statement on January 23rd, following passage of new ethics rules, that the new rules did not go far enough and that he would work for an independent ethics office.

"Having served for 31 years in the Navy, I have been largely shaped by my background in the military, where rules were extraordinarily stringent on gifts, trips, and contractor's relationships with us. And now serving as an elected representative to serve the American people in a different way, I would expect such rules to be the same for Members of Congress – or even higher," said Congressman Sestak. "This Commission would have the power to investigate alleged violations by Members, and employees of the House of Representatives, and present a case of probable ethics violations to the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, as well as to make recommendations on violations to the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct that it report to the appropriate Federal or State authorities."

Congressman Sestak has strongly supported ethics reform since the start of his term. On January 23rd, he cosponsored and voted for H.R. 476 to strengthen ethics rules in Congress by reforming the congressional pension system.

“During my campaign, I promised to make accountability and ethics a top priority,” noted Joe. “That is why I cosponsored bipartisan legislation to deny pension benefits to House members convicted of corruption. No taxpayer should have to contribute a single cent of their hard earned money to any member of the House of Representatives, who engages in serious abuses of power.”

The Congressional Pension Accountability Act requires that House Members convicted of certain federal felonies related to the performance of their official duties forfeit their Congressional pension. Current federal law only strips pensions in cases of treason and certain espionage-related offenses. Crimes added by this legislation include bribery of public officials and witnesses, offenses related to officers and employees acting as agents of foreign principals, conspiracy to commit any of the above crimes, conspiracy to violate post-employment restrictions statutes, and perjury in falsely denying any of the above.

On January 4th, Congressman Sestak’s first day in office, he also co-sponsored and voted for a rules package which: prohibited lobbyists from paying for trips for Members of Congress or their staffs - with the exception of travel limited to one day/night; banned lobbyists from paying for meals or tickets to sporting/entertainment events; banned the use of corporate jets; and required all House employees to go through ethics training annually

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "DeepBlue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives.

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